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ABSTRACT

This study examines a semester-long cooperative project between a university and local school district. A six-member Oklahoma State University faculty team worked to develop a training course for teachers at a small, rural school district of predominantly Native-American students. Conflicts and contradictions emerged during the process regarding plans, world views, roles and relationships, educational intervention, questions of change, and the purpose of the course itself. For school faculty members, the program was a means to obtain graduate-level course credit; for administrators, it fulfilled state staff-development requirements; and for others, it meant greater professional status. The university team began with a multicultural, student-based educational approach, and attempted group decision-making. School personnel, predominantly Anglo-American, desired change only on their traditional cultural terms, which were largely different from their Native students. Political rifts emerged. The project achieved no lasting changes in educational content or delivery, although the university team did gain "local" (experiential) knowledge. It is recommended that researchers have a good understanding of the school environment before initiating similar partnership projects. Positive educational reform also depends on better understanding of the interplay between local and research knowledge. (TES)

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BARRIERS TO CHANGE: REFLECTIONS ON AN EXPERIENCE

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BARRIERS TO CHANGE: REFLECTIONS ON AN EXPERIENCE

Abstract

An issues course delivered by university faculty to the faculty and administration of a predominantly Native American school district is examined in terms of individual participant's perspectives of and barriers to change. Contradictions of project purposes, world views, change, intervention strategies and relationships are presented and examined as barriers to change in this district. Advice for practice and support of new change paradigms conclude the paper.

BARRIERS TO CHANGE: REFLECTIONS ON AN EXPERIENCE

Look, I see the Sun...
He is my father
He is my beginning

Look, I see the Moon...
She is my grandmother
my guardian keeper

Look, I see the Stars...
They are my friends
my relatives

Look, I see the universe
I see myself

High Eagle, Osage/Cherokee

This Native American poem reflects a cultural heritage that few people understand or appreciate. It tells of the person, it tells of the universe and it tells of the interconnectedness of all things: how we are all one. This Native American cultural perspective incorporates values different from those of the Anglo culture. This oneness conflicts with the icon of individualism in America; it supports a relaxed and flowing perspective of time, the cyclical nature of life and a less materialistic world where respect and is highly cherished. The time-bound, competitive and materialistic Anglo world are in sharp contrast with these cultural norms. Yet, these fundamental belief influence perceptions about what the world is, attitudes about how we should act and values about what is important (Walters, 1989).

This concern for contradictions is important in that it affects the "provision of appropriate learning experiences for children." When an administrator/teacher conflict occurs, outcomes may not be achieved. The need to coordinate groups of children is fundamental to the administrator, but the need to individualize instruction is a fundamental teaching strategy. Therefore, providing educationally for what the group needs may miss the educational mark for specific individuals in a class; test scores may improve overall, but specific individuals may not perform well. Additionally, when a teacher/student cultural or world view contradiction exists, learning may be

impaired. The Anglo goal of independent learning may compete with the Native American goal of collaboration. In all, expected behaviors may not occur, important concepts may not be internalized, and withdrawal from uncomfortable surroundings may result, physically as well as mentally and emotionally.

Background of the Project

After the Civil War, between 1880 and 1883, approximately 400 Otoe and Missouria tribe members were relocated to the Indian Territory from their lands along the Kansas-Nebraska border (Gibson, 1978; Wright, 1951). Of Souian stock, they reflect the "melting pot" Plains Indian culture and have remained a strong cultural community to this day (McReynolds, 19__). With the support of this Native American community, two educational organizations joined forces in the Fall of 1990 in an attempt to broaden their own perspectives and awareness. It was hoped that this alliance would enable an understanding of cultural beliefs which could assist educators in providing appropriate learning experiences for children of differing cultural backgrounds. This unique partnership was designed to improve community/school relations and expand the knowledge base and cultural awareness levels of participating district faculty and administration.

As part of this effort, six Oklahoma State University faculty (from three departments and two colleges) collaborated in the design and delivery of a graduate course at the local school site for all teachers within the district. Preschool through high school teachers, in addition to all district administrators, enrolled in the course for credit.

The course teaching team was diverse, evenly split by gender and ethnicity as well as representing both ends of the professorial rank spectrum: four full professors and two assistant professors. One faculty member, male and Anglo, was a sociologist from the College of Arts and Sciences. The other faculty were from the College of Education. They included a curriculum development expert (male, Native American), a school counseling psychologist (female, Anglo), a special educator (female, Anglo), an instructional

supervision state leader (male, Anglo) and an educational change faculty member (female, Native American).

Because the course was allowed to evolve in ways designed to meet the needs of those enrolled, class sessions as well as separate planning and debriefing meetings were held weekly throughout the semester.

Virtually all at Frontier Public Schools said that they were committed to change. The district faculty believed that what they did was appropriate and that they are able to reach all students. They believed that they did make a difference. They also agreed that they would like to be more successful, but were not certain exactly what should be done. They wanted student absenteeism to decrease and test scores to increase. District faculty were also eager to reduce student discipline problems and increase time on task, specifically educational tasks. Goals for change were set high and were well defined.

Theoretical Framework

The individuals involved in this project possessed their own perspectives and definitions of change. The term "individual change," as used herein, refers to the individual's cultural and change paradigm as well as their own place and purpose in this community project. The range of perspectives reflect those of the district faculty and administration as well as those of the course instructors.

By way of example, consider the following: "The meaning of change depends on the concept of reality one holds" (McWhinney, 1992, p. 10). This concept forms the foundation upon which analysis of individual change occurs within this project. The following carries this concept even further:

> Beliefs about reality support different processes of change that in turn lead to inconsistency, paradox, dilemma, and contradiction. This is particularly evident when the participants or parties are from different cultures, possessing different religions, class backgrounds, or national traditions. (McWhinney, 1992, p. 10)

This concept of change is based upon two specific assumptions. The first is that "on most occasions, the members of such a mixed group let their fundamental disagreements go unrecognized and unresolved. Most people, most of the time, construct blinders, fictions, obscuration that allow them to overlook their diversity" (McWhinney, 1992, p. 10). This lack of awareness of lenses and realities is common and pervasive. It, however, clouds interpretations of goals and decisions about actions that should be taken.

The second assumption is one of conflict: conflict of world view, not conflict of issues.

> If the content or degree of the contemplated changes is deemed significant, the change efforts themselves produce conflicts that are unresolvable by any method that is framed in the same world view as is the problem. The larger the movement, the greater is the likelihood that the change itself will call out open conflict regardless of the content of the issue. (McWhinney, 1992, p. 10)

One of the outcomes of this assumption is the reality that negotiation of the conflict is necessary prior to consensus on and implementation of the needed change(s). It is also possible, if not likely, that participants may never get beyond this point. Thus, change will not occur; both sides will become frustrated and believe the other is the cause of the problem.

For those involved in the Frontier Project, different cultural realities resulted in contradictions and dilemmas. The Anglo and the Otoe-Missouria cultures were in contradiction. The dilemma generated by this contradiction was one of conflict. Priority of views, strategies for intervention and loci of change were questions that needed to be answered, but the answers were different depending upon each cultural and change perspective. Intertwined within this contradiction were relationship and role conflicts (e.g., school faculty/administration, university faculty/administration, school faculty/ university faculty; teacher/student; practitioner/theoretician; Native American/Anglo). Resolution of these conflicts was difficult, and for some impossible. Core values and beliefs were being challenged because of these

conflicts. Participants held firm to their values; the result was stalemate.

Purpose

This paper examines the semester-long experiences of the university and district faculty and administration which resulted from this school/university/tribe partnership. Specifically, contradictions of project purposes, world views and change are identified and explained. Presentation will focus on the barriers to cultural exchanges as well as the barriers to change which resulted. The first section will focus on unrecognized and unresolved disagreements in purposes. The second section will focus on conflicts of world views. Specifically, contradiction in perceived priority of views, strategies for intervention, loci for change, and roles and relationships will be examined. The last section will present an evaluation of the project based upon the outcomes of the course, changes within the district since completion of the course a year a ago. Resulting barriers to cultural exchanges derived from this analysis will be presented as recommendations for practice.

Point of View

Out of necessity, this presentation is biased. It is from my perspective, that of a university faculty member involved in the design and delivery of the course which would "enlighten" and ultimately "improve" the educational experiences of both Anglo and Otoe-Missouria students in the school district. I have tried to keep in mind my own perspectives in the hopes of being able to "look at them" as well as see through them (Langer, 1974). An audit of my perspectives has been conducted with other university faculty involved with the project; they understand my interpretation of what follows.

Unrecognized Disagreements

The individuals involved in this project were many, six faculty from the state university and the 24 faculty and four administrators from the district.

We all held unrecognized disagreements about the purpose of this project, based upon our individual interpretations of the project purpose(s).

There existed at least eight major project purposes, held by participants in varying degrees. All of the purposes centered around coursework, collaboration and culture exploration. They included:

1. Credit. The district members saw the course as an opportunity to gain graduate level credit on site and at no financial expense (tuition for each faculty member and administrator was being covered by the district). The course was scheduled to meet 15 times throughout the semester. Time was the greatest anticipated expense. "It would be so convenient, right after school and I wouldn't have to drive anywhere."

2. Staff Development. Participation in this course could also be used to fulfill state-mandated staff development requirements. The school/university partnership provided the superintendent with an opportunity to provide for his faculty, at his site, at a remarkably reduced rate. He would receive 15 weeks of "instruction" in the examination of educational issues, with a focus on multicultural awareness, which he saw as a benefit for himself, his faculty and administrators. This "instruction" would be delivered by four highly valued and well-respected full professors (three from the College of Education and one from the College of Arts and Sciences) and two eager assistant professors from the College of Education. Each instructor's salary was covered by the university, therefore, at no expense to the district. District costs were that of tuition at the state institution; the superintendent's Board of Education fully supported the involvement of faculty and administration in this project and willingly covered the cost of enrollment for each participant.

3. Status. School faculty believed that their participation would be viewed positively by their superintendent and building level administrators. Many believed that enrollment in the course was the perfect way in which to show their administration (or supervisor) that they were interested faculty and administrators. Their participation supported interest in self-

improvement through staff development, the improvement of education for students within their system through the exploration of critical issues, and the improvement of cultural awareness through the examination of behaviors and outcomes in their district.

The purpose of enhancing status also existed for university faculty. Involvement in this project pleased the College's administration and the younger faculty saw this as an opportunity to learn from those established in the field and demonstrate for respected colleagues their own abilities and areas of academic interest and expertise.

4. Cultural Enhancement. District faculty and administrators also saw this course as an opportunity to better understand cultures, a belief held by many of the university faculty as well. Working with people of different cultural backgrounds does not alone result in the transfer of information about cultures or the understanding of cultural differences. The focus of the course, the educational issue of multiculturalism, offered all an arena in which to look at the Native American culture and its influence upon education generally and specifically within this school district. "We hope that this course will help us better understand what we need to do and who we are dealing with," demonstrates this sentiment (district administrator).

5. Collaboration. The university faculty saw this as an opportunity to collaborate. For some, this was our first opportunity to do research in the field in an collaborative environment. The responsibility for the project was distributed across six individuals instead of a upon the shoulders of one. Because of its collaborative design, all university faculty needed to provide input and were responsible for directing learning experiences at some time during the semester. We also had the opportunity to debrief each other on the trip back, and our weekly planning meetings supported the collaborative and flexible nature of the project. Each week we would dialogue about the direction in which the project needed to go. We had the opportunity to practice many of our philosophical and educational preachings first hand and in the company of our peers or revered colleagues.

6. Research. The university faculty saw this as an opportunity to do field-based cultural research close to home. The district was within 30 minutes of the campus and the course participants were required to meet a minimum of 15 times through the semester; our legitimate entry into this environment was established. We could even use a university vehicle for transportation, at no financial cost to us. What an opportunity!

7. Change. This educational and instructional experience afforded a district the opportunity to improve its delivery of instruction to all of its student population, enhance cultural awareness, develop and implement parental involvement strategies and encourage a variety of other community relations projects. Both district and university faculty, as well as the district's administration, believed that their school would be different because of this experience, that a change would occur and that the change would benefit all.

8. Political Sovereignty. This purpose revealed itself as the course developed. Cliques in the school were extremely powerful and membership highly selective. A "we versus them" reality among faculty emerged as a driving force. High school and elementary teachers wanted to depose their administrators, middle school faculty wanted to placate theirs. The superintendent wanted to appear "politically correct" and the university faculty wanted the district faculty and administration to recognize the need to refocus their instructional strategies to include Native American cultural norms. Each political unit was "right."

Discussion. Professionally, I entered this project in hopes of achieving the status, collaboration and research purposes. I was a new faculty member and I felt a need to be certain my revered colleagues knew my abilities. I also knew that research was required for academic promotion and tenure. Personally, I hoped to achieve the change and cultural enhancement purposes. As a card carrying Miami, I had benefitted from scholarships and grants. Yet I had no cultural relationship with the tribe and physically belie my heritage. I wanted to learn about "my people" and hoped this project would enable me in some small way to repay a debt to people I did not know. I

hoped this project would result in enhanced educational experiences for all, but particularly for the Otoe-Missouria. Ultimately, I also supported political sovereignty. What we wanted to do to and for the faculty and administration of this district would help, needed to be done and was "right."

Support for and buy-in of these purposes was different for each individual associated with the project; some purposes were supported by all, others by only a few. And, purposes emerged as the project evolved. Some purposes became refined and changed as the project evolved. Some participants, more than others, changed their support for purposes as time and experiences passed. Where each individual stood at the beginning of the project was not where he stood at project's end.

For example, a faculty member from the district supported three purposes: status, staff development and political sovereignty. She wanted to please her administration, she wanted an easy avenue to staff development "points," and she wanted to be certain that her views and the sovereignty of her group reigned supreme. An administrator supported status, political sovereignty, staff development and cultural enhancement purposes. She was new to the district, was being challenged by her faculty and needed "brownie points" with administration. The coursework supported her continued efforts toward administrator certification. She also knew that children under her auspices were not being treated fairly, were not equitably experiencing educational opportunities, and needed her support.

These different purposes went unrecognized and unresolved for almost half the semester. As the weeks passed, it slowly became painfully apparent that what we wanted for these people they themselves did not want and could not even see as goals. They wanted to see change, but they did not want to change. They believed that their views of education were appropriate for all the children in their school and that change was needed. However, that needed change was change from the students, their families and the community, not from them. Anglo cultural values were those present in the schools. For Native American students to be successful, they would need to be able to

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function within the Anglo world; cultural awareness would only cloud the issue. Awareness of community values, socioeconomic status and family needs or structures misfocused the educational process. Problems existed, but the problems were with the children, their families and the community, not with the education provided in the district or the expectations of faculty and administration. The typical 19th century educational mentality, part and parcel of the "civilization policy," was still alive and well in this district at the end of the 20th century (Gibson, 1978).

From the perspective of faculty and administration, we were ivory tower idealists who wanted to come into their world and change it. We cared nothing for them and the trials and tribulations they had endured to get to where they were. We did not understand the problems they had in their classrooms and the many reasons why Native American children were not successful in their school. These failures were not linked with educational philosophy or instructional strategies. Rather, they were because the children would not do what was needed, necessary and appropriate.

Initially the purposes presented above were not seen as conflictual or competing, but supporting each other harmoniously. No one was aware that a hierarchy of purposes might exist and that individual perceptions of this hierarchy were widely different. Improving education for children was espoused by all as the tantamount goal, but lip service to this goal ran rampant. In fact, the purpose that we openly supported was the last on the hierarchical list of many.

We all had on blinders. We could not see purposes and world views other than our own. This clouded our vision of what the project was to do, the ways in which this "doing" was to happen, and the ultimate outcomes of our efforts. This world view diversity resulted in conflict. For the university faculty, these world view conflicts resulted in a plethora of ethical dilemmas:

- Given what we believed these people needed, should we be doing for them what they believed they needed?
- Given the conflict of educational and cultural world views, should

and could we proceed with the project at all. Were the conflicts, which became defined in terms of "correct" and "appropriate" values and beliefs, greater than our best efforts?

- Should and could we continue assistance and education when our students were unable or unwilling to "see" what we had to offer?
- Might we be hurting and not helping the educational environment?
- Might and could we make matters worse?

We could control what happened in the course, but we could not negotiate world view conflicts. Half way through the project, we decided to focus the course on district faculty/administrator self-designed projects with the hope that something could be saved, some benefits reaped. Participants were asked to design a project that they believed would assist others in enhancing the educational experiences of students or engender increased parental/community involvement in the school. Group grade level projects were designed and presented to all members of the project. Each student was asked to develop a Theory of Practice or Statement of Educational Goals. These two experiences were the culminating course exercises.

Conflicts

World views were in conflict from the first day of planning for this project. By the end of the course, four different conflicting views had emerged: culture, education, control and change. The priority of these views among participants was also in conflict as were the strategies for intervention, loci for change and participant roles and relationships.

Cultures. Contractions between the Native American and Anglo cultures were surprisingly missing. For the majority of the course participants, cultural differences did not exist; these were Anglo educators attempting to solve Anglo educational problems. The university faculty entered the project believing that awareness of cultural diversity was needed by the white educators in the district, but the white faculty and administration saw no need for this knowledge. What they wanted to know was how to get all children

to act Anglo. If they could do this, test scores would rise, discipline problems would diminish and all would be well.

Education. A diverse set of perspectives or world views of education were supported by this group. They ranged from the Hunteresque director or orchestrator of all learning experiences for students to the child-centered and child needs perspective of Montessori. Depending upon your perspective, the course design was in sync with what you were used to doing and encouraged in your own classroom, or it was strikingly different, demanding, too free flowing to be predictable, in some ways foreign and definitely disquieting.

The university faculty held the view that education was student based and formed. We wanted opinions from course participants about what they wanted to gain and the various ways in which this might occur. Opinions were openly sought from course participants. They were not used to providing input. The ways in which they were used to being dealt with by their administration and the ways in which they functioned in the classroom did not involve this activity. "I would never ask my kids questions like these. It would waste too much time and they wouldn't have anything to say anyway" illustrates this point (secondary teacher).

We also hoped that we could speak openly and honestly, viewing the course as a process of necessary inquiry. We were virtually unable to get either openness or honesty. The political intrigues of the district necessitated a closed environment and dishonesty. Exposure of perspectives that were conflictual with colleague and administration might prove damaging to one's career within the district. "We can't really say what we feel, not with her here" supports this reality (elementary teacher).

Control. A range of perspectives about organizational control were found among participants. Consensual decision-making was hoped for by the university faculty. We wanted all involved to have a say in what would happen and how it would happen. This was a joint project by educators, for educators, and we needed to design something that would be of benefit to all educators involved in the project. This was group control and participatory

governance at its best. No one person would be able to direct what happened, all voices would be heard and in this way all would be able to benefit. District faculty, however, expected well-defined assignments, reading lists and due dates. They wanted to know what would be done to them, then they could decide if they would join in or not. An a priori design was what they wanted, along with a top-down approach to the course and its administration. The conflict in control of the course was striking. We could not get the course participants to move the course in any direction. If we moved it, we were in conflict with our world view. This dilemma created stress for all involved.

This same set of conflicting world views about control was held by district administrators. The district superintendent was a top-down type administrator. He was right. He sought input from those he believed would see things his way. His secondary administrators saw the world of administration and control of schools the same way. They wanted to know what needed to be done, and then they would do it the way the superintendent dictated. The elementary principal wanted to know what needed to be done, and then she would figure out the best way to achieve the desired goals. This slight distinction in interpretation of control caused friction and resulted ultimately in her leaving the district. The conflict was too great to be resolved. The world views of control were contradictory.

Change. Two distinct views of the process of change emerged as the course evolved: one was evolutionary, the other revolutionary. From the perspective of evolution, change would occur as needed to help people and the organization adapt to needs and demands that emerged within their environment. The district faculty believed that they were evolving as the course unfolded; the university faculty saw no change. Students were still being treated the same way, blinders were in place. Problems within the children, the family and the community remained; these beliefs still exist today.

The revolutionary change perspective developed as the course progressed. It became apparent to the university participants that if any change(s) were

to occur it would have to be because we caused or fostered it; nothing would evolve without the revolutionary confrontation of beliefs and values. We did not hold this belief at the beginning of the semester, but by semester's end it was fully developed and mourned.

Strategies for Intervention. Generally, participants viewed strategies for change as faculty or school-based - "we will do unto them." University faculty believed that, through our consensual processes and appropriately philosophical perspectives, we could enhance education in this school district. "You know, we can give them what they need." The district administration and faculty believed that their efforts were currently enhancing education and that minor, extremely minor, modifications in what was done to students would prove beneficial. "I would like to know how to get parents to volunteer in my classes. That would really help."

There was also a belief that the professionals knew best what should happen. The professionals were district educators on one level and university faculty at another. District educators were in the best position to help "poor little Indian kids" improve their test scores and be able to become model students in the classroom. What they needed, professionals could provide using time-tested strategies; processes or products need not be altered. The university educators believed that they should change district personnel. The thought of changing ourselves had not been recognized. Was it possible that our views were incorrect? Did we need to change? Questions like these were not emerging for consideration.

Loci for Change. Various questions emerged throughout the project which illuminated the issues of where change should occur and who should be affected. In the classroom, it appeared that a contradiction in perspectives surrounded the student and teacher. Who should change? Should the teacher alter methods and strategies to meet the needs of the student, or should the student bend to fit the teacher's expectations. Should the one doing the educating or should the one being educated change? Should the school change or should the community? Which comes first? Which controls the other? Which

educates which?

In this view of the world, we have come full circle. The cultural dilemma that none would recognize at the onset of this project was now the driving force and dominant component of the impetus for change. The community with its different tribes, different cultures, different values and beliefs uses its monies and those from the state to support education. Should this education meet the needs of the community or should it support the research and practice of the nation? Does education know better than the parents and community leaders what is needed? Is the Anglo educational system the best one for Otoe-Missouria children? Support for both perspectives was given by all participants. This dilemma was the greatest of all. Whose view of "right" is really "right" for this district and more specifically for these children who will have to live in two worlds, the world of the Otoe-Missouria and the world of the white man?

Roles and Relationships. The participants in this project wore many hats. They were parents, educators (both teachers and administrators), students, friends, enemies, colleagues, Anglos and Native Americans. The existence of these roles alone was not conflictual or in contradiction, but their linking was. This linking resulted in conflictual relationships.

Roles of participants were frequently contradictory. The district administrators were used to a relationship with faculty in which they were in charge, but the on-site course in which they were students required them to give up this control during the course for involvement with their faculty as peers and colleagues. In the context of this course, their perspectives were those of the student; but some of the participants in the course still heard their administrators speaking. Certainly the administrative perspective carried more practical and realistic credence than could be overlooked?

There were also participants who were teachers during the day, but students in this course. The conflict in these roles was striking and resulted in another contradictory relationship. If one's view of education is deciding for and doing unto others, then dramatic changes in behavior are

needed by the teachers as they became students in this course. The faculty in charge of the course wanted these same teacher-students to self-design their involvement in the course. The requisite roles between teachers and students from these different perspectives were conflictual and contradictory.

Other contradictory relationships existed between project participants. The superintendent was married to one of his elementary teachers. Her relationship with faculty would be clouded further. Some of the faculty had served with the superintendent at his previous work site. Relationships from that past affected allegiances and organizational understandings in the present. Faculty hired by past administrations felt insecure with the new administration; old relationships were not like the new ones.

There was also a conflict between the practitioner and the theoretician. Theory tells us about change, the ways in which people react to it, and the effect different realities have upon the processes involved (Hall & Horde, 1989). That awareness, however, clouded my vision because theory is without context. This context was so unique that practice was all that should have been noted. What was happening should have been the focus, not what should be happening, according to theory.

Additionally, there was a good Indian/bad Indian role conflict experienced by the three Native American participants. The district teacher wanted to be Anglo, she was the good Indian. She held high expectations for students and, not surprisingly, Native American students were not able to meet her standards. She worked in an area with high community visibility, but supported only Anglo children's extracurricular experiences. She was a good Indian in that she was Anglo. I was neither good nor bad; I was silent. The other university faculty member never denied his history or culture; neither did he force it down anyone's throat. He was straddling a fence purposively because he did not want to alienate, he wanted to include. But his efforts at inclusion also allowed participants <u>not</u> to consider cultural issues.

<u>Discussion</u>. Resolution of these conflicts was difficult, and for some impossible. Generally speaking, we could not effect changes that people were

not willing to explore. Core values and perspectives were challenged, and participants held firm to their values. Nothing much happened. Conflicts in views and beliefs associated with processes, change and cultures reigned.

Evaluation, Changes and Advice for Practice

Given the conflicts in project purposes and world views held by project participants, what gains and losses were observed and what recommendations for practice can be generated?

Evaluation. A teacher's ability to function effectively within different cultural realities will enhance not only the educational experience of students in American classrooms, but every individual's ability to accept and cherish cultural diversity, whatever the ethnic origin. The district and university were joined through this for-credit graduate-level course. Through this experience an attempt was made to enhance understanding, appreciation and awareness of the cultural diversity typical of school districts possessing a high percentage of Native American students.

We did not succeed. We met, we went through the motions, but our best efforts were not well received. We tried, but the personnel problems within the district and the blinders all of us wore prevented anything from happening in the way we had hoped. We learned, they learned, but not much changed. Students got credit, we got paid, and life continued. I was disappointed as were others; some were just relieved it was over.

Changes. The projects designed by the course participants included a handbook for substitute teachers, a room for parent volunteers, and a revised negotiations contract. The handbook for substitute teachers was printed and distributed to teachers as needed. However, it resulted in no change in the educational delivery or content for students in the district. The parent volunteer room was put on hold due to space constraints. Again, no change in community contacts or relations occurred. The contract revision was used, but incorporated no additional community or different types of student interactions.

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University participants came away from the project changed. The realities of school districts headed by superintendents such as the one in this district were brought home. If top administration does not want things to change, they will not. This is known only in negative terms. We do not know if the opposite is true because we did not experience it.

In all, little in the district concerned with education of Native American students was changed by our efforts or those of project participants. Two administrators left the district, both driven out by their faculty or the superintendent. One tenured faculty member was dismissed; other probationary teachers were retained. I do not believe that the educational experiences of children in this district were amended in any way due to this project. Time will tell if additional changes occur related to this effort.

Advice for Practice. Insights gained from this year's experience will help not only those involved in the partnership but those who may be planning similar partnerships or experiencing related problems. Six specific pieces of advice have been generated:

1. Identify blinders. Try to understand, through communication and interaction, perspectives held by people before beginning any project. Note espoused beliefs but also those supported by actions. Compare them and, if possible, work with people who are consistent in their words and actions. Also, if possible, work with people who appear to identify with the same world views and purposes. Changing world views is very difficult, if not impossible.

2. Safety. A safe environment in which to conduct such an interaction is necessary. Neutral territory (not the school site) would have helped. Convenience for participants was not as important as an environment in which people felt safe and could be honest and open. Moving the course site to the tribal community center would have proved interesting. This neutral, legal and cultural site would have changed dynamics and awareness, in all likelihood.

3. Raise the Stakes. The larger investment in what people are doing,

the more likely they will take it seriously. These people did not have to leave their school site, they did not have to pay their own tuition, and they did not have to make up missed assignments. In fact, if they did not come to class, that would have been accommodated, up to a point. The old adage of getting something for nothing and the ultimate worth of the something came to mind.

4. Selective Grouping. From the start, if we had grouped faculty of like grade-levels together, which we did part way through the semester, we might have covered more ground and been able to allow people to really examine what was happening in their school as well as the impact of those happenings on education. The safety of selective groups really opened up discussions. But we always returned to the larger group at the end of class and each time the discussion stopped.

5. Set Ground Rules and Keep Them. If at the beginning of the course a decision is made to go in one direction, the course should continue in that direction. The changing of horses mid stream was seen by some as foolish, by others as confusing and by a few as trickery. One district faculty member said, "I would have never signed up if I had known this is what we would end up doing." This also helps support openness and safety.

6. Let change happen/Let the status quo remain. Know that change may happen, but it may not. If you plan on change, you could be sorely disappointed. If you let that be one option, you have the chance of getting what you want. Be flexible and understanding. Look at what is happening from the variety of perspectives present. Listen, look and reflect. Provide what is wanted and hopefully what is needed will follow.

Additional advice can also be generated by casting our experiences against Fullan's (1991) description of an emerging paradigm for change. He hopes it will incorporate six themes "needed to cope with and turn change to our advantage" (p. 346):

1. from negative to positive politics,
2. from monolithic to alternative solutions,

3. from innovations to institutional development,
4. from going it alone to alliances,
5. from neglect to deeper appreciation of the change process, and
6. from "if only" to "if I" or "if we." (p. 347)

This project provides evidence in practice which supports selected themes. Some of the evidence is in negative terms, other evidence is positive. The project does suggest that negative politics are powerful enough to control best efforts for change. It also suggests the need for an appreciation of the complexity of the change process. All sorts of factors affect change, and non-mechanical responses might have served our needs better.

Positively, teacher/administrator projects allowed the meaning of change as reflected in projects designed to meet the goal of change in community/school relations to be defined by individuals in their own terms. Three different change projects were designed by district faculty and administration. In allowing the flexibility to individuals for their own projects in support of change, we fostered change. Mandates and fiats were not used, and one overall plan was not designed. People need to come up with their own plans and ideas in support of change. They need to prioritize, examine timeframes, and synthesize innovations into manageable proportions. People need to invest in what they believe is important, from their own perspective.

Individuals implement change, institutions support that implementation. We learned these lessons, and they proved positive strategies.

Summary

It may seem that this component of the university/district/tribe partnership project was less than successful. However, we believe that in some ways we were successful. District faculty got graduate level course credit and staff development points. Some university faculty achieved status and research goals. Some district administrators bolstered their support and political coalitions. Many people learned, some people changed. Generally,

participants got what they wanted. However, the district and the community may not have gotten what it needed.

Concluding Thoughts

What does all of this say about individual change and related barriers to change? The experiences of participants in this course have provided evidence in support of a new paradigm of change (Fullan, 1991); barriers within individuals have been highlighted and perspectives identified. These experiences have also supported the need for new and different ways in which we think about and do change. Most of all, they indicate that change happens because of people and sometimes in spite of them.

Importance/Significance

Our efforts in this partnership bring to light another contradiction, however. The search for knowledge to help and inform practice as well as theory is complicated by the different types of knowledge generated by research. One type of knowledge is the result of direct experience. This "local knowledge" comes from the context in which the research was generated. It is site specific and deemed by some extremely "narrow" in its transferability or applicability. At the extreme, it is useful at and applicable only to the originating site within the same timeframe, which is an impossibility because things change. Yet, local knowledge leads to "research knowledge," a second type of knowledge (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1992).

Research knowledge is that information and wisdom which informs practice, directs policy and influences future trends in education. It is "all else being equal" knowledge. But if all else is equal, "it cannot have a direct bearing on practice because it is oblivious of compelling local issues that frame the thinking and drive the behavior of practitioners in a particular locale" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991, p. 2). It purposively "ignores particularities of persons and places in order to be generalizable, but at the risk of applying to nothing in particular" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1992, p. 11).

The interplay of local and research knowledge played a big part in our understandings of what happened in this project. Our experiences from this partnership provide both local and research knowledge. The hope is that the local knowledge provided here will impact research knowledge and other local efforts. Schools and the processes of education need to foster cultural awareness; in this way they need to change and be reformed. Because, "very likely the prospect of reforming schools depends on a better understanding of the interplay between research knowledge and local knowledge. The more we know of the dynamics of this interplay, the more likely it is that research can have an effect on the nature and effectiveness of schools" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991, p. 2).

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